

QUALITY COUNTS

SUMMER 2007

Food Assistance Conference a Success

The Division of Social Services hosted a Food Assistance Program Conference April 10-12, 2007, at the Sheraton Four Seasons in Greensboro. The theme of this year's conference was "Food Assistance – What's on the Menu?" The conference workshops focused on policy topics that promote payment accuracy. Everyone who attended gained something and we look forward to seeing you again next year. Thanks for making this year's conference a huge success!

Performance Bonuses Awarded



Left to Right: Sherry Bradsher, Director, Peggy Fouts, USDA Southeast Region Director, Jackie Sheppard, Assistant Secretary for Long Term Care and Family Services, Jane Schwartz, Economic Services Chief, Jessica Shahin, USDA Associate Deputy Administrator

During the conference opening session, North Carolina was awarded two checks totaling \$8,683,766 earned as a result of our outstanding timeliness rate of 97.80% and payment accuracy rate of 97.03% in FFY 2005. The checks were presented by Jessica Shahin, a senior official with the United States Department of Agriculture. Thanks to each of you for making this possible.

FOOD ASSISTANCE CONFERENCE 2008

The Food Assistance Conference Committee has begun planning for next year's conference. We would like to offer county staff the opportunity to submit suggestions, comments, or ideas, regarding workshops, exhibits, and activities. Please send correspondence to David.Locklear@ncmail.net.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2007 FOOD ASSISTANCE CONFERENCE:

- ◆ 550 Attendees
- ◆ 92 counties represented
- ◆ 12 workshops held
- ◆ Best Practices Mall
- ◆ Workshop material now posted online at www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/training/fsp.htm

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Active Case Error Rate Awards

*The following counties received an award for maintaining an Accuracy Rate of
100%*

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Alamance | Cherokee | Hyde | Perquimans |
| Alexander | Chowan | Jackson | Person |
| Alleghany | Craven | Lee | Polk |
| Anson | Dare | Lenoir | Rockingham |
| Avery | Davie | Lincoln | Rutherford |
| Beaufort | Edgecombe | Macon | Scotland |
| Bertie | Gates | Madison | Stanly |
| Bladen | Graham | Martin | Stokes |
| Buncombe | Granville | Mitchell | Surry |
| Burke | Greene | Moore | Transylvania |
| Caldwell | Halifax | Nash | Union |
| Carteret | Harnett | Northampton | Washington |
| Caswell | Haywood | Onslow | Watauga |
| Catawba | Henderson | Pamlico | Wayne |
| Chatham | Hoke | Pasquotank | Wilkes |
| | | | Yancey |

The following counties received an award for maintaining an Accuracy Rate of
94.16% - 99.99%

The following 10 counties received an award for
Highest Food Assistance Participation Rate

| County | Accuracy Rate |
|------------|---------------|
| Cleveland | 96.88% |
| Cumberland | 98.60% |
| Davidson | 99.10% |
| Durham | 95.50% |
| Forsyth | 99.34% |
| Franklin | 97.63% |
| Gaston | 98.35% |
| Guilford | 98.45% |
| Hertford | 94.27% |
| Iredell | 95.99% |
| Johnston | 97.19% |
| McDowell | 95.22% |
| Pender | 96.41% |
| Pitt | 96.86% |
| Richmond | 96.29% |
| Robeson | 97.66% |
| Rowan | 97.11% |
| Wake | 97.80% |

| County | Participation Rate |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Mecklenburg | 89.50% |
| Cabarrus | 88.76% |
| Scotland | 87.07% |
| Caswell | 87.04% |
| Anson | 82.16% |
| Vance | 81.53% |
| Cleveland | 81.40% |
| Catawba | 80.35% |
| Gaston | 80.26% |
| Caldwell | 79.98% |

**State Active Case Error Rate
October 2006 – December 2006
1.65%**

**Keep up the great work on our
State Active Case Error
and
Participation Rates!**



Quality Control Synopsis

Below are examples of Active Case Errors cited by Quality Control.

1. A household of three had current wages. At application, wages were calculated correctly but the monthly income amount was entered incorrectly into FSIS. An Agency Error over issuance resulted from the data entry error.
2. A Semi-Annual Reporting household of two had child support and SSI income. Household had unreported spousal support present at recertification. A Client Error over issuance resulted because of failure to report income.
3. Agency records showed a household reported and verified their primary heating and cooling expense at application. The county did not allow the utility deduction. An Agency Error under issuance results from failure to react on reported information.
4. A household of two had UIB and SSI income. At recertification, UIB benefits were calculated correctly but the incorrect income amount was entered into FSIS. An Agency Error over issuance resulted from the data entry error.
5. A household of four with two ineligible non-citizens was given a non-prorated rent deduction. The county failed to prorate the rent even though one of the ineligible non-citizens was responsible for it. An Agency Error over issuance resulted from the misapplication of policy.
6. A one-person Simplified household receives SSI. During a 12/05 recertification, SSI in the amount of \$386 was budgeted and the amount later increased to \$401 during February's COLA adjustment. A SDX printout dated 12/28/05, included in the record, indicated the household's SSI benefits would increase to \$603 effective February. An Agency Error over issuance resulted from the failure to act on reported information.
7. At application in 8/06, the household failed to verify its primary heating and cooling expense. The county did not give the household a utility deduction. An OLV printout, placed in the record, indicated the receipt of a LIEAP check at the household's current residence in 2/06. An Agency Error under issuance resulted from the misapplication of policy.
8. At recertification, agency records showed a household of one received two RSDI checks in the amounts of \$605 and \$129, totaling \$735. Documentation in the record indicated the client receives dual entitlement and the two checks combined total \$605. This amount is the combination of the client's SSA and widow benefits. The \$129 amount was included in the \$605 amount. An Agency Error under issuance resulted from the data entry error.
9. During recertification, a household of one filing separate reported no income. It was later discovered the household has Civil Service retirement income of \$1302. Inclusion of this income resulted in the income exceeding the net income limit of \$817. A Client Error over issuance resulted from failure to report income.

Meet Your Food Assistance Policy Staff

Shelia Dorsett
Program Integrity Consultant

Joseph Scott
Energy Assistance
Consultant



David Locklear
Food Assistance and
Energy Programs Supervisor

Veronica Wilson
Food Assistance Consultant

Not Pictured:
Erica Jennings
Food Assistance Consultant



Recent Policy Changes

DSS Adm. Ltr. 5-2006

Effective: December 1, 2006

Each year, the Department of Labor releases a national list of counties that have a 24 month average unemployment rate that exceeds the national average by 20 percent. Seventy-two counties in North Carolina meet the high unemployment criteria. The US Department of Agriculture approved a waiver request to exempt ABAWD from the three-month time limit effective December 1, 2006, through November 30, 2008. North Carolina's remaining 28 counties will continue to exempt their ABAWD population by utilizing the ABAWD 15% exemption through November 30, 2008. Under this exemption, USDA allows states to exempt no more than 15% of a state's ABAWD population from the three month time limit. ABAWDS in counties geographically exempt from Employment and Training activities are not automatically exempt from the time limits. However, these counties fall under the waiver or under the 15% exemption.

DSS Adm. Ltr. 6-2006

Effective: February 1, 2007

The purpose of this letter is to outline the procedures for handling the Social Security/Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) mass change in Social Security payments, SSI payments, and Medicare Part B premiums. On the night of January 31, 2007, FSIS automatically updated food assis-

tance benefits effective February 2007 to reflect these changes.

DSS Adm. Ltr. 7-2006

Effective: January 1, 2007

In House Bill 2174, the General Assembly increased the minimum wage in North Carolina from \$5.15 to \$6.15 effective January 1, 2007. The Federal minimum wage remains \$5.15.

DSS Change Notice 1-2007

Effective: January 1, 2007

The purpose of this change is to add policy to the Food Stamp certification Manual regarding North Carolina Education Lottery interception and update information regarding the Civil Rights section.

DSS Change Notice 1-2007

Effective: January 1, 2007

The purpose of this change notice is to add clarifications and make corrections to the Food Stamp Certification Manual as reflected in updated interpretations recently received from the US Department of Agriculture and changes in federal regulations regarding households subject to Semi-Annual reporting. A Food Assistance Unit must report when their income exceeds the gross income limit for its household size. This includes the income of new household members.

Announcing Disaster Food Assistance Program Training

The State Economic Services Staff will provide Disaster Food Assistance Training on June 5 in Greenville and on June 12 in Salisbury. Topics for the meeting will include a review of policy and procedures, automation, logistical planning considerations and an overview of the responsibilities of the State Emergency Management Division. This annual exercise promotes better preparation and awareness about disasters and how and when a Disaster Food Assistance Program may be implemented in our state.

Program Integrity Training Conference Held in Greensboro

The North Carolina Program Integrity Training Conference was held at the Clarion Hotel in Greensboro April 25 – 27, 2007. A wide variety of workshops were offered for both new and seasoned investigators. Approximately 140 attendees participated in this year's conference and invaluable information and policy clarifications were discussed. Thanks to every one who attended this year's conference.